



State of Maine Board of Corrections

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FOCUS GROUPS:

Budget
Forensic
Inventory of Needs
Pharmacy
Pre-Trial
Technology
Transportation
Victim Services

January 14, 2009

Senator Stan Gerzofsky
Representative Anne Haskell
Members, Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Senator Gerzofsky, Representative Haskell and Members:

The Board of Corrections is a newly created entity to oversee and unify the State's correctional system. Public Law 653, passed last year, it is the result of a compromise reached by Governor Baldacci's administration, the associations representing the counties, the sheriffs, and the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee of the 123rd Legislature. It sets out a process to fundamentally change the organization and operation of the correctional facilities and caps property tax assessments for Corrections.

Public Law 653 requires the Board to make initial reports to the Joint Standing Committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters by January 15, 2009 and by April 1, 2009. Thereafter, the Board is to report at least annually, beginning January 15, 2010. Reports must include any recommendations for amending laws relating to the Unified Correctional System or the Board. Please consider this as our initial report due by January 15, 2009.

Since the Board's confirmation by the Senate in August, we have met eight times and toured three county jails and two state correctional facilities.

The Board is staffed by the Corrections Working Group which is made up, equally, of state and county officials. The Corrections Working Group's responsibilities are to develop recommendations for your consideration which:

- redesign the corrections system based on need for correctional services,
- achieve efficiencies; and,
- improve correctional policies, procedures and practices.

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At the Board's direction, the Corrections Working Group has established nine subcommittees to identify immediate and long-term efficiencies in our correctional system. Some specific results from this effort include:

- joint purchasing of pharmaceuticals (currently nine counties and the State are in a joint purchasing contract);
- the establishment of a regional transportation hub system that will coordinate and reduce the costs of prisoner transports; and,
- the development of a bed management system that allows anyone within the system to know where there are available beds.

One of the Board's major responsibilities is the funding and investment in the State's correctional system including the review and approval of county jail budgets and recommendations for the funding of the Department's adult corrections facilities and services. We have met with every county to review their corrections budgets. We have also heard from the Department of Corrections about their proposal for the supplemental and biennial budget.

Chapter 653 includes a requirement that the Commissioner of Corrections request funding of \$1.5 million for fiscal year 09 to assist the county jails in transitioning. I am pleased that Governor Baldacci has honored this commitment by including the request in his supplemental budget.

The Board's initial approach to the allocation of \$1.5 million was to distribute the funds to address a county's growth in its jail's expenditures beyond their property tax cap. Given the fiscal situation we are facing today as a state, however, the Board determined that funding business as usual is not a wise use of limited resources. At our last meeting, we agreed on a distribution plan that keeps the county jails intact while positioning them for the future as we assess and recommend the future system.

Our goal is to ensure that these investments reflect the needs of the entire corrections system. Let me emphasize this: if appropriated by the Legislature, the Board will allocate these funds as investments in the transition to a redesigned, efficient corrections system.

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The supplemental budget request of \$1.5 million is essential to realizing long-term system efficiencies and in designing a corrections system that addresses our needs. The Board has an ambitious timeline with the goal of approving and implementing the redesign of the corrections system in the next fiscal year.

The Board is looking forward to our continued work. I anticipate that we will be providing the committee with additional updates on our progress and will report to the committee again on April 1, 2009. I do expect that we will have legislative changes for your consideration. We will try to provide these to you as soon as we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neale A. Duffett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Neale A. Duffett, Chair
Board of Corrections

ND/keb